

Music In The Marquesas Islands

By E. S. CRAIGHILL HANDY AND JANE LATHROP WINNE

INTRODUCTION

114 The native music of the peoples of the different island groups in Polynesia offers a field for research of great interest and value both intrinsically and historically, which has up to this time been practically wholly neglected, a field perhaps richer than any other branch of ethnographic research that American or European students will be able to find in this region of the Pacific where so much of the native culture has been lost under the foreign overlay. This whole rich field lies open to anyone who cares to cultivate it, for it is still possible to hear the singing of genuinely native songs and chants in every part of the region. But no one should enter upon this work without a full realization of its requirements. The research, if it is thoroughly performed, demands not only training and experience but also the ability to learn and use various of the native dialects, infinite patience, and the capacity for enduring considerable physical and mental hardships.

Information concerning the native system of music in the Marquesas was acquired during my stay in those islands as a member of the Bayard Dominick Expedition of the Bishop Museum in 1920-1921. At that time a number of native songs and chants were recorded and a study made of the significance of the songs and the manner of presentation.¹ On returning to Honolulu the musical aspects of Marquesas chants and of Polynesian poetry in general were discussed with Miss Jane Winne, instructor of music in Punahou School, who has given much attention to Hawaiian singing. During 1923 Miss Winne served as volunteer assistant with the Museum field party engaged in an ethnologic survey of the Society Islands.

121 In the preparation of this paper I have had the skilled assistance of Miss Winne, particularly in providing a method of transcription and in the preparation of the melodic figures.

This brief and fragmentary study of chants is to be taken as merely sug-

¹ Handy, E. S. Craighill, *The native culture in the Marquesas*: B. P. Bishop Mus., Bull. 9, 1922.

12/ gestive, first of the nature of the music of the natives of the Marquesas, and secondly of a graphical method of transcribing native melodies. If it presents facts or examples of melodies that may be useful to other students entering more deeply into this subject in the future, and if the study as a whole embodies suggestion or information that may stimulate the interest of a few whose attention is given to the present day efforts of students toward securing adequate records for the study of the history of cultures and of music, this paper will have amply fulfilled its purpose.

E. S. C. H.

Linton—The Marquesas Islands

447

CONCLUSION

In spite of the large amount of literature dealing with Polynesia, few parts of this vast region have been carefully studied and there is no part for which the information can be considered at all complete. New Zealand is probably the best known locality. Satisfactory, but by no means complete, information is available for Hawaii and Samoa and the present activities of Bishop Museum will contribute additional information regarding Tonga, the Austral Islands and the Marquesas. 121

Accounts of the culture of single localities are chiefly valuable as a basis for the careful comparative study, which alone can throw light on the relations of the various Polynesian groups and ultimately on the larger questions of Polynesian origin and diffusion. The final solution of Polynesian problems can come only from a correlation of the evidence along all lines. Comparative studies based on a single class of evidence—traditions, religion, material culture or physical type—serve to arrange the data in order and make them available for such correlation. Theories based upon such partial studies can only be tentative but are justifiable on the basis of Bacon's dictum that truth can be brought out of error much more readily than out of chaos.

Recent studies of physical type have proved conclusively that the Polynesians are not a pure race but are made up of at least three racial elements (70). These elements are a dolichocephalic negroid race, a dolichocephalic or mesocephalic race which shows Caucasian affinities, and a brachycephalic race with slight Mongoloid affinities which Sullivan calls Indonesian (79, b, p. 18). The frequency and distribution of the two non-negroid races seems to indicate that they entered the region in nearly pure form. All three races are present in most of the Polynesian islands but they vary in the proportion which they bear to the total population of each group. The negroid element is strongest in Easter Island but is important in northern New Zealand and is found throughout southeastern Polynesia. The Caucasian element is strongest in northern New Zealand and the Marquesas. The Indonesian element is strongest in Tonga but is important in Samoa, southern New Zealand, Hawaii and the northern Marquesas. 144

Polynesian material culture shows an even more complex condition. The climate and products of all the Polynesian islands except New Zealand are so nearly the same that local difference in culture can not be ascribed to environmental causes, but it is hard to determine which of them are due to differences in the culture of the original settlers of each group. Many of the Polynesian groups are separated from their nearest neighbors by hundreds of miles of open sea and must have originally been settled by very small parties of immigrants. The *tuhuna* system, which placed the more important industries in the hands of 171 101

Tattooing in the Marquesas

By WILLOWDEAN CHATTERSON HANDY

INTRODUCTION

Drawings and photographs of tattooing patterns on the bodies of natives were made by the author during a residence in the Marquesas Islands in 1921. As tattooing is now forbidden by the laws of the country and the art is consequently dying out, this collection of the last specimens of tattooing patterns which exist today in the Marquesas has seemed to demand a complementary collection of information regarding the practice of the art, to the end that the beautiful motives might at least be partly accounted for and might some day take their merited place in the history of art. The data have been drawn from natives who have been decorated, from one old *tuhuna*, or artist, who has practised tattooing, and from literary sources, thus piecing together a fairly accurate picture of the practice. Discussion of the design itself, of which the natives know nothing today beyond the nomenclature, is undertaken in a spirit of appreciation and with the hope that the suggestions offered regarding the evolution and significance of this form of decoration may uncover other possibilities and lead to a more conclusive interpretation of the art.

THE PRACTICE OF THE ART

It would appear that this form of body decoration was not confined to certain ranks or classes in the Marquesas, though what might be called a property qualification limited somewhat the complete covering and work to the wealthy who could afford to employ the best artists and stand the attendant expense of feeding them and their assistants as well as the large band of *ka'ioi* who erected the special house for the occasion. A father prepared long in advance for the payment for tattooing of his first-born, raising pigs, and planting *ute*, paper mulberry (*Broussonetia papyrifera*), for the making of tapa as gifts for both the *ka'ioi* and the *tuhuna*. Payment also took the form of ornaments, war clubs, and more recently, guns. Langsdorff says that they paid for their decorations according to the greater or less quantity of them, and to the trouble the figures required; that during the thirty or forty years when the body was gone over again and again with the tattooing bones until the skin was completely covered, the cost became considerable; and that such all-over decoration necessarily indicated a person of great wealth (10 p. 120)¹. It follows

¹ Throughout this paper the numbers in parentheses refer to the bibliography on page 26.

Polynesian Decorative Designs

By RUTH H. GREINER

INTRODUCTION

- 121 The purpose of the present study of Polynesian decorative design is to determine the characteristics of Polynesian art, with a view of obtaining evidences of migratory movements of Pacific races.

Detailed studies have been made of the decorative designs found in the Marquesas, Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga and New Zealand—*island groups selected as representative of Polynesia, and for which the collections in the Bernice P. Bishop Museum are the most complete.*

- 128 Each distinct design is described and illustrated, but designs common to two or more localities are discussed only once. For each island group and for Polynesia as a whole, the designs recorded have been roughly classified as angular geometric, curvilinear, and naturalistic representations.

Most of the illustrations are based upon rubbings and sketches of designs in the collections of the Bernice P. Bishop Museum. Other drawings are based upon photographs and upon illustrations in published works.

It has seemed best not to isolate the design from the object which it decorates for certain designs are found to be adapted or at least limited to wood carving, others to tattooing, and still others to tapa decoration. Furthermore, the exchange of decorated objects between the peoples of two or more island groups has assisted greatly in the dissemination of designs which characterize those objects. Therefore, evidence of contact of one group with another is afforded by the comparison of decorations which are found, for example, on house posts, bowls, war clubs and tapa. For this purpose, tabulated summaries of designs and objects have been prepared for the Marquesas, Hawaii, Samoa, Tonga and New Zealand, and general comparisons made of designs from different parts of Polynesia and also for Melanesia. It will be seen that the arrangement of designs upon the surface of the objects, as well as the form of the design, is characteristic of different groups.

- 121 The incompleteness of this survey is freely recognized. The paper is presented as a contribution to the interesting problem of the origin, characteristics, and racial significance of Polynesian art.

[p. 3]

/1/

Marquesan Sexual Behavior

The primary purpose of this paper is to present an objective report of Marquesan sexual behavior as obtained during the years 1956, 1957 and 1958 on the island of Nuku Hiva in the northern group of the Marquesas. These data will be compared with ethnographic and historical documentary evidence concerning sexual behavior, whenever possible. Further, comparisons will be made with earlier reports of the sexual behavior of the Marquesans and other Polynesian groups, as the data permits. Finally, conclusions will be presented concerning a number of aspects of Marquesan sexual behavior that have aroused some interest in previous reports. [131]

The data upon which this report is based were collected while the author was carrying on archeological fieldwork in the Marquesas Islands, under the sponsorship of the American Museum of Natural History of New York. During these years, a total of 12 months were spent in the Marquesas archipelago, mainly on the island of Nuku Hiva. All other islands in the archipelago except Ua Huka were visited, however. 122 114

As familiarity with the native culture increased, a number of problems developed in which the evidence of archaeology and observable native customs of the present failed to coincide with certain of the previously published accounts of Marquesan aboriginal culture. Many of these /2/ problems have been dealt with in my report of the archeological excavations on Nuku Hiva (Suggs, R. C. 1961. The Archaeology of Nuku Hiva, Marquesas Islands, French Polynesia. Amer. Mus. Anthro. Papers Vol. 49 Pt. 1.). They involve such topics as the derivation and age of the Marquesan occupation, population density in prehistoric times, native political organization, economic structure, etc. 121 [113]

An important area in which a discrepancy between reports and observed behavior appeared was that of sexual behavior. The presentation of Marquesan sexual behavior in Kardiner and Linton (Kardiner, A. (Ed.) The Individual and His Society. New York, 1939.), quite familiar to all students of culture and [113]

/2 cont. /

personality, did not seem to coincide in certain areas with many of the more obvious native customs. Furthermore, a number of practices described for the Marquesas not only seemed to be completely absent there but also contrary to data from elsewhere in Polynesia. Preliminary investigation into the sexual behavior of the natives immediately brought forth evidence of a situation which was somewhat more complex than originally apparent, being particularly interesting as a case in the dynamics of Marquesan culture contact, as will be demonstrated in this paper.

121 ●

Investigation Techniques

In the investigation of sexual behavior in the Marquesas, fluency in the language was of utmost importance. Actually, I believe that it is extremely difficult to conduct any type of valid anthropological investigation in Eastern Polynesia without attaining linguistic proficiency. The Marquesans use their native tongue as a weapon against outsiders, who they consider will never bother to learn it. A large amount of joking and trickery is indulged in before the face of the investigator who must work through an interpreter. In such a situation, it is relatively easy for the native to impart erroneous information without too much fear of being apprehended in his falsehood.

122

The native language has become an efficient tool with which the Marquesan may satisfy his intense resentment against the privileged white intruders, and their inquisitive prying, by astutely misleading them, until, hopelessly confused, they become a source of fun and butt of derision for the whole population.

123

124

[609]

[522]

However, knowledge of the language on the part of the investigator makes such deviousness impossible, contributing materially to the collection of information on any topic from weather prognoses to historical traditions.

122

Direct interrogation of informants on the physical aspects of sexual behavior proved to have a relatively limited utility. Despite the fact that sexual topics comprise a large part of the

124

[521]

/111 cont. /

fell to the lot of the chief. It was common for a chief to use his wife's sexual propensities as a means for attracting valuable warriors or retainers into his household, and holding them with him. The institution of polyandry was not a result of the numerical inferiority of women as has been claimed, however (see Linton, Handy, p. 101), as the census records discussed above clearly show that such a preponderance of males never occurred in the time for which records are available.

According to Gracia, polygyny was rare, even among chiefly families. This reliable source states that he saw only one individual with two wives; a paramount chief of the island of Ua Pou who held a position of such high prestige that he was deified soon after his death.

Despite the presence of the secondary mate institution, it is interesting to note that the state of monogamy is /112/ depicted most frequently in legends (Handy).

Extramarital relations of a casual sort appear to have been as much a feature of aboriginal culture as they are in modern times. Legends contain numerous references to such relations, and statements of informants indicate that the modern situation is quite representative of the former state of the culture, at least as far back as the last decade of the nineteenth century.

Beating of unfaithful wives as practiced today was also known in aboriginal times, often being carried to the point of death of the miscreant (Handy 1923, p. 100). Another form of expression of sexual jealousy -- suicide -- which was often used by women in the past, is no longer found in Marquesan culture. This is probably due to the strong negative sanctions applied by the Catholic church against this action.

Summary

In the preceding discussion comparisons have been made between modern Marquesan sexual behavior and the sexual behavior as reported by historical sources and ethnographers, in an attempt to reconstruct aboriginal practices and trace the dynamics of this behavior over the

/112 cont. /

120 years elapsed since the French colonization of these islands. Attempts have also been made to identify the causative forces that have produced the changes noted in sexual behavior. Naturally, these forces have acted on the society as a whole and often the effects upon the sexual behavior are not direct but mediated through other agencies. To discuss them /113/ in relation to sexual behavior alone is perhaps to bias or slant the picture, but the over-all acculturation processes going on in the Marquesas are far beyond the scope of this paper; therefore, statements of interrelationship between sexual and other social and economic phenomena have been generally restricted to areas of major importance.

In general, the acculturation changes in Marquesan sexual behavior have occurred in areas that are completely expectable in view of the nature and history of Marquesan-European culture contact. As I have discussed elsewhere, the protracted period of frequent whaler visits to the island between 1790 and 1840 set the stage for culture collapse by placing considerable strain on the whole fabric of native society. The economy was severely taxed by the necessity of provisioning European ships that stopped in large numbers in the major bays of the main islands, carrying away with them very sizable quantities of food. Furthermore, famine of very serious proportions occurred between 1803 and 1813. Internecine warfare increased as a result of firearms, traded for provisions by whalers, while the introduction of white diseases helped to increase the death rate, already swelled by war. Thus, when the French moved in in 1840, the native society was by no means a healthy specimen: considerable disorganization was evident in both social and economic spheres.

The French occupation was preceded by a period during which French missionaries smoothed the way and obtained vital information on the culture, which was subsequently used to hasten its destruction. When the military /114/ expedition arrived, the French immediately set about systematically destroying the social structure, first by subduing and/or replacing chiefs, thus gradually eliminating all capable leadership. The substituted "chiefs" were often not acceptable

121 ●

182
648
175

[731]
[726]
[439]
[164]

175
182
648
797

/117 cont. /

The discrepancies encountered in comparing the Linton ¹¹⁴ report with other sources on Marquesan culture are also encountered when going /118/ further afield; comparing the Linton report with data available from elsewhere in Polynesia (Mead, Metraux, Ferdon). If Linton's views were to be accepted, the Marquesan culture would be completely atypical ¹¹⁴ ₁₇₁ for the rest of Polynesia. The present data show, however, that there is a considerable area of similarity between the sexual behavior of the Samoans and that of the Marquesans despite the considerable distance, both geographical and chronological, which separates these two cultures. In Easter Island, relatively closer in space and time to the Marquesan culture, similarities in sexual behavior are also apparent, despite the heavy acculturation that occurred on that island in the past century.

While casting considerable doubt on the validity of many ¹¹⁴ of Linton's statements and conclusions, the present study demonstrated rather clearly the superior quality of E. S. C. Handy's ethnography (1923), corroborating the statements and conclusions of this author time and again. Unfortunately, it is Linton's version of Marquesan culture which has been most widely used among non-Polynesianists. In view of the fact that it was prepared for and published in Kardiner's volume on personality and culture, it is little wonder that it has become current in the writings of that particular area of the behavioral sciences.

In addition to demonstrating the distortions implicit in ¹⁸² Linton's view of Marquesan sexual behavior in particular and ¹²¹ ● culture in general, the present study presents an interesting case of the dynamics of culture change. In Marquesan society, so severely shattered by the French /119/ colonization, native social organization is almost a meaningless form: the obliteration of countless statuses and roles, the tremendous conflicts engendered between aboriginal and introduced roles have all acted to break down the social structure to an absolutely minimal residue of its former self. In many other areas of the culture (art, technology, music, etc.) most of the culture content has vanished without a trace, yet in the area of

/119 cont. /

behavior which has been under the most severe attack by mission and colonial government alike, there is a remarkable carry over of many behavioral traits which are of such a minor order that they might well have been expected to disappear along with so much of the rest of the culture. The survival of these traits is particularly unusual in view of the fact that the social system which gave them significance no longer exists, yet the traits live on.

It is suggested that aboriginal forms of sexual behavior have become a symbol of resistance for the Marquesans, and that it is this which has contributed to their unusual longevity when compared with the rest of the native culture. Like the native language which is used as a weapon, the sexual habits of the Marquesans are a means of inflicting psychological damage on the white intruders, and are especially aimed at the vulnerable figure of the missionary, who is the symbol of authority in most localities and against whom resentment is often overt.

Thus, Marquesan sexuality today is seen to be a rather unusual complex of aboriginal survivals with some recent additions resulting from acculturation, preserved in its present form by virtue of the fact that /120/ it serves a function for which it was not originally destined -- that of expressing antagonism toward colonial-missionary rule in one of the only ways presently permissible.

Changes are occurring now, especially among those presently entering adolescence, and these changes appear to be occurring at a more rapid rate than has been seen to the present. Whether or not this is a result of increased efforts at social control on the part of the missionaries or to increased integration into the outside world will require additional studies at future dates to trace the changes whose first evidence has been noted here.